

REMARKS

I. Status of Application

Claims 1-4, and 6-34 constitute all currently pending claims in the application. Claim 1 is currently amended. Claims 17 and 18 stand withdrawn. Claims 10, 13, 19-27 and 30-34 stand allowed in their present form.

II. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-4, 6-9, 14-16, 28 and 29 stand rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Widell (U.S. Patent No. 2,825,407). Applicant traverses this rejection for at least the following reasons.

Amended claim 1 recites that the gap continues from a first side face that is a side face of one of the adjacent punches to a second side face that is a side face of the other of the adjacent punches in the first direction, and recites that projections support at least one of the first side face and the second side face between which the gap continues in the first direction.

The Examiner regards the punch members 116 as the claimed punches, and the guides 70, 74, and 76 as the claimed guide member and projections in Widell. The Examiner appears to regard the gap between the punches 116 and between the guides 70 and 74, or 74 and 76 as the gap of claim 1. (Office Action at p. 4, lines 2-6.)

In Widell, however, the guides 70, 74, and 76 do not support at least one of the side faces of the punches 116 between which the gap continues in the first direction, as is required of the projections and punches of claim 1. Thus, Widell fails to teach each and every element of claim 1, and therefore fails to anticipate claim 1. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the

Examiner withdraw the rejection of independent claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-4, 6-9, 14-16, 28 and 29.

III. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 11 and 12 stand rejected by the Examiner under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Widell. Applicant traverses this rejection for at least the following reasons.

The deficiencies of Widell with respect to amended independent claim 1 are set forth above. As claims 11 and 12 depend from claim 1, Widell is also deficient in its teaching regarding dependent claims 11 and 12. The Examiner's assertion that "it would have been obvious to the skilled artisan at the time of the invention to have modified Widell's device to size the punches . . . to any size based upon needed product sizes" does not make up for the above-described deficiencies of Widell. Thus, even if one were to assume the additional assertion of the Examiner regarding punch size, this knowledge in combination with Widell still fails to render claims 11 and 12 unpatentable. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner withdraw this rejection.

V. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

This Application is being filed via the USPTO Electronic Filing System (EFS).

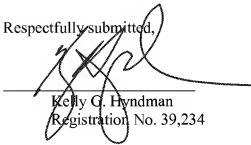
Applicants herewith petition the Director of the USPTO to extend the time for reply to the above-identified Office Action for an appropriate length of time if necessary. Any fee due under 37 U.S.C. § 1.17(a) is being paid via the USPTO Electronic Filing System (EFS). The USPTO is also directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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